The following was sent to the KYAE list-serv.

Week 1 Message

The 2014 GED® test is a high school equivalency test.

Just as it has been since it was introduced in 1942, the GED® test is a measure of high school equivalency. To earn the GED® diploma, students have to demonstrate that they have the same skills and abilities as current high school graduates. The students taking the GED® test today are preparing for the jobs available in today's marketplace, so they are asked to meet the current standards.

The 2014 GED® test was normed on graduating high school seniors in 2013. The norming group included students from 46 states, including Kentucky, and was designed to model the diversity of the full graduating class of 2013 (socioeconomic, urbanity, region, gender, race, ethnicity, ability achievement, school district size, school type, as well as other demographic data). In the more-than-a-decade since the last time the GED® test was normed on graduating high school seniors (in 2001), there has been exponential knowledge growth unlike that which has come before, particularly in terms of advances in technology and the development of a global economy. In other words, today's high school graduates are expected to know a significantly larger body of knowledge than those who graduated in 2001.

So, if it is a high school equivalency test, why is there so much talk about common core and college- and career-readiness?

It is an uncomfortable fact that high school completion does not always mean college- and career-ready. For the last decade, there have been initiatives to address this disparity. Starting with the American Diploma Project and then the Common Core State Standards, governors, heads of state departments of education, and private foundations have made recommendations to help secondary schools bridge this gap. Kentucky has been onboard with this effort and was the first state to adopt the Common Core State Standards.

During this same time period, the rigor of the GED® test also came under scrutiny; employers and postsecondary institutions expressed that it should be elevated to meet current-day skill requirements. This resulted in the planned update of the GED® test being delayed for a couple of years so that the common core and state standards could be addressed in the new test edition. However, keep in mind that the test was normed on 2013 graduating seniors, not students who had gone through 12 years of the newer standards. What resulted was a high school equivalency test that also added a second achievement level (GED® Honors designation) to demonstrate college- and career-readiness.

So, to pass the GED® test, a student must meet the high school equivalency level, the same standard required of those graduating from traditional high schools today. However, the 2014 GED® test also allows those with higher level skills to

demonstrate those skills and earn an "honors" designation. "Honors" can be earned on each of the individual content area tests. An "honors" designation indicates that this student is ready to enroll in credit-bearing college courses without any additional placement tests or developmental courses. Prior to the 2014 GED® test, students could make high scores, but those scores did not inform colleges or employers about whether the student possessed any higher level skills; the test did not measure that. **Those higher level questions are on the test, but students do not have to have that knowledge to earn the GED® diploma.**

The 2014 GED® test is, first and foremost, a high school equivalency test; it is not a college-readiness test. The test can provide additional information for those going on to postsecondary training or education, but that higher level does not have to be achieved in order to earn the high school equivalency diploma.

If you have additional questions, contact Rae Smith at rae.smith@ky.gov.

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